

Message Text

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42

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

EUR-12 ACDA-05 SAM-01 SAB-01 /085 W

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R 041154Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4164

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2977

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, IS

SUBJ: KHADDAM CLARIFIES ASAD'S STATEMENT THAT ARAB SUMMIT
WOULD NOT DISCUSS PEACE WITH ISRAEL

1. DURING AUGUST 2 PRESS CONFERENCE FOR LEBANESE JOURNALISTS
ACCOMPANYING PRIME MINISTER KARAME TO DAMASCUS, PRESIDENT
ASAD STATED "THERE IS NO QUESTION OF AN ARAB SUMMIT EXAMINING
THE EVENTUALITY OF PEACE WITH ISRAEL BECAUSE THAT
QUESTION RELATES DIRECTLY TO THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE. ARAB
CHIEFS OF STATE DO NOT REPEAT NOT CONTEMPLATE DISCUSSION
OF SUCH A SUBJECT EITHER IN THE NEAR OR REMOTE FUTURE."

2. WHEN I ASKED KHADDAM AUGUST 4 TO CLARIFY ASAD'S MEANING,
FONMIN REPLIED THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO GROUNDS FOR CONFUSION,
THAT ASAD ALWAYS SELECTS HIS WORDS PRECISELY. PRESIDENT
WAS MAKING THE POINT THAT "NORMAL", NATURAL RELATIONS WITH
ISRAEL" WERE SO FAR IN THE FUTURE THAT NO ARAB LEADER COULD
PROPOSE THIS AS A SUBJECT FOR DISCUSSION AT AN ARAB
SUMMIT. SYRIA AND THE OTHER ARAB STATES REMAIN IN A STATE
OF WAR. AT THE PRESENT TIME THIS IS A "SILENT WAR" BUT THE
NEAR EAST HAS BEEN IN THIS STATE OF WAR SINCE 1948. THE

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PHRASE "NO PEACE, NO WAR" IS A COMPARATIVELY RECENT JOURNALISTIC
INVENTION.

3. KHADDAM CONTINUED, ARABS AND ISRAEL MUST FIRST REACH A STATE OF PEACE (ARABID "SALAAM") ONLY THEN CAN ONE BEGIN TO LOOK AHEAD TO THE FUTURE WHEN NORMAL AND NATURAL RELATIONS OF PEACE (ARABID "SULH") WILL PREVAIL BETWEEN ARABS AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL.

4. ANY ARAB LEADER WHO EVEN IMPLIES THAT NORMAL, NATURAL RELATIONS, I.E., THE STATE OF "SULH," IS AT PRESENT A TOPIC OF DISCUSSION IS NOT BEING SERIOUS AND SHOULD BE DISREGARDED. KHADDAM ASSERTED THAT ARAB SUMMIT AT KHARTOUM IN 1967 HAD EXPLICITELY USED THE WORD "SULH" IN REJECTING CONSIDERATION OF SUCH RELATIONS AT THAT TIME. ARABS, HE CONCLUDED, HAVE BEEN CONSISTENT IN USING THIS TERMINOLOGY.

5. COMMENT: PARA 3 ABOVE REPORTS THE MOST POSITIVE STATEMENT KHADDAM HAS EVER MADE TO ME ABOUT ISRAEL'S FUTURE. HIS MATTER OF FACT DELIVERY WAS STRIKING.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEETING AGENDA, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, SUMMIT MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 AUG 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975DAMASC02977
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750268-0839
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750882/aaaacutl.tel
Line Count: 81
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 AUG 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <28 NOV 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KHADDAM CLARIFIES ASAD'S STATEMENT THAT ARAB SUMMIT WOULD NOT DISCUSS PEACE WITH ISRAEL
TAGS: PFOR, SY, IS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006